REALM OF X

MARVEL 003

FALL OF X

GRØNBEKK
NEVES
BEREDO

Of all the ways one can welcome *intruders* to one's land--

--*Saturnyne* chooses *violence.*

Her army is in wait far beyond the ten realms.

(But such details do not hold her back.)

ᚲᚨᛗᛟᚲ.

As the fabric of the universe tears--

--as her soldiers travel through dimensions and time--

--the world *screams.*

The sound is hollow and deep--

--it is the trill of despair--

--of trees weeping--

--of stones shattering--

--of the winds gasping for air.

The sound reaches far.

WHAT THE HELL IS THAT?

It feels like the world is breaking!

There! Look at the sky!

Far in the distance, they see the ships coming through the tear in the sky.

But then reality *fights back--*

Hrrk--!!

Hrrk--!!

--and the power it takes to keep the rip open is too much--

--even for Saturnyne.

But she did not pick Vanaheim for its beauty.

Deep in the citadel, there is enough power to rent time and space itself.

Only *one* zzzhip and you could not get that through without losses.

We are waiting, Zzaturnyne.

Thizzz is not good *enough.*

The power source will be activated in time. You will all get through.

If she could but get to it.

But right now we have more pressing concerns. One of my boundary charms has been activated-- we have four intruders within the citadel.

Kill them.

Very well, Queen.

We need *the source,* Your Grace. You need to talk to Curse.

Don't worry, Tsanna. I have other alternatives if the little brat proves uncooperative.

You do not mean--

I do.

We're so close, Tsanna. If the Vanir wish to test my resolve, I'm happy to show them the extent of it.

The mutants got in through the back gate. Double the defenses around the citadel. This might be some pathetic attempt to distract us.

Yes, my Queen. What will you do?

I'm going to catch a storm.

It was always a *long shot.*

To find a way *home.*

They went there to find Curse.

What are they?

Hell if I know, but I think they're here for *us.*

If we attack them, there will be no hope for diplomacy.

FIRE AT WILL!

I don't think they're interested in diplomacy, Dani.

I agree... but I think we owe it to the others to--

KA-BOOM

Maybe even find a way to peace.

THWACK

HEYYY!

ARGHH, YOU BLOODY ALIEN BASTARDS!

Never mind.

(But it was always a long shot.)

[fall__of]
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FALL OF X

REALM OF X

[fall__of]
[_____X]

Violence on the Western Front

After the harrowing events of the Hellfire Gala that left mutantkind scattered across the universe, Magik, Mirage, Typhoid Mary, Marrow, Dust and Curse found themselves stranded in Vanaheim and caught up in an ancient Vanir prophecy upon which the fate of the entire realm hangs in the balance. And worse yet, Curse, who seems to be at the center of this prophecy, is missing.

Saturnyne has successfully isolated Curse and endeared herself to the young trickster, all with the goal of getting Curse to use her powers to unlock a well of ancient Vanir power source to use for her own nefarious goals of conquest.

Meanwhile, Mirage, Dust, Marrow, Typhoid Mary and the warriors of House Mult have been clashing more violently with Saturnyne's forces as the day of prophecy looms ever closer. With the mounting violence, their search for the missing Curse has grown more dire, and in a fit of desperation, Magik, though powerless, has made the brash decision to branch off on her own and head straight into the last place they haven't looked: The Emberstone Citadel

1___[MAGIK]
2___[MIRAGE]
3___[TYPHOID MARY]
4___[DUST]
5___[MARROW]
6___[CURSE]
7___[SATURNYNE]

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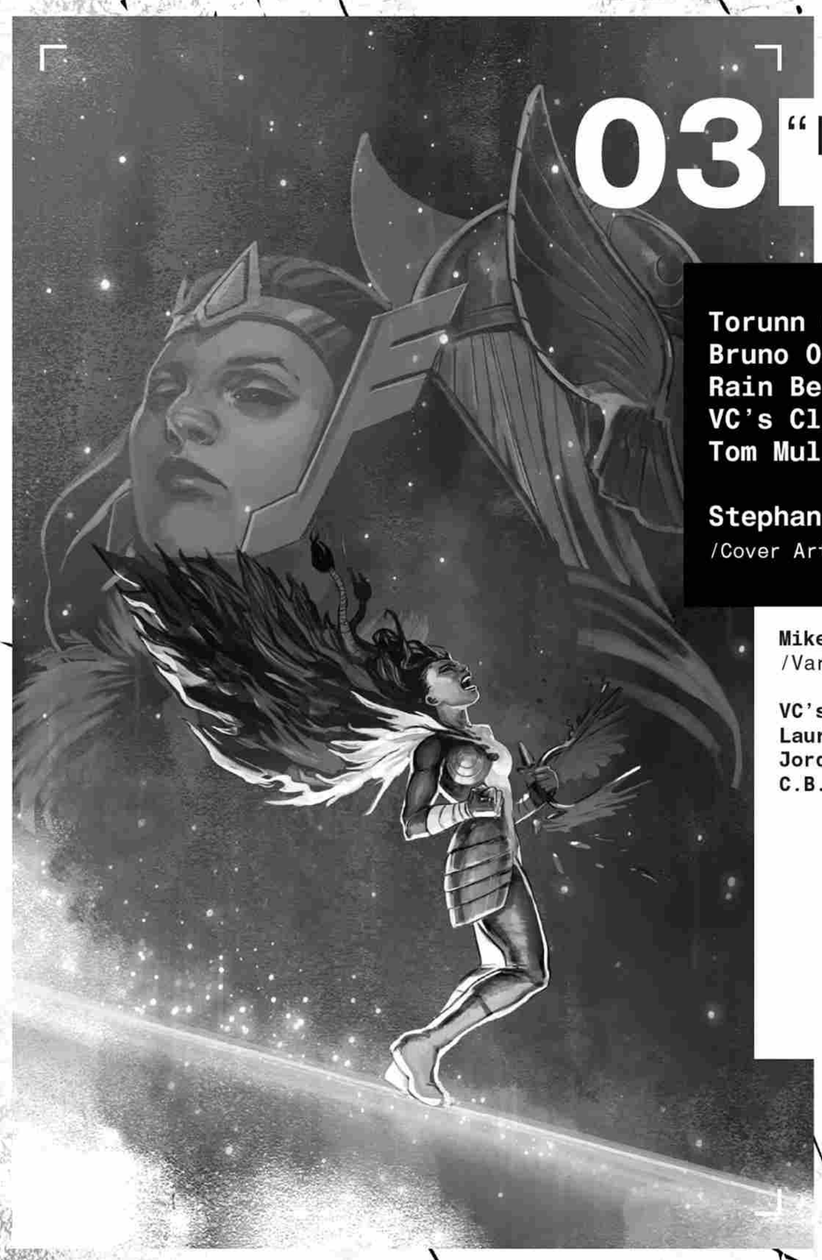

03 "FIRST BLOOD SPILLED"

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Mirage uses her powers to search for the *fears* of their enemy.

They do not have a word for it in their language.

(The fearful among them do not survive their training.)

I got the one on the left.

The only *desires* she can see in them--

--are the deaths of their enemies.

(And that is not something the mutants intend to grant them.)

Dust breaks their arrows before they find their target.

Mary plays with the ones that get through.

Is that really the best you can do?

Marrow lets her anger out.

The storm! Protect yourself.

Sand is the least of your problems!

KRSSSH

But the sky is dark with the shadows of their enemies.

There are too many.

I can do this all day, Marrow.

Is that...is that *her? The Witch?*

NO... that's...

And then they see her.

...SATURNYNE?!

The Witch watches them run.

FLICK!

My wind for yours, Dust.

She feels them as they move through the invisible walls surrounding her domain.

Who gives a $#%& who she is?!

It matters because--

--whatever we thought this fight was--

Saturnyne's magic tears through the storm, splitting it to pieces.

(She knows what power lies in the congregation.)

And deep inside, Sooraya hurts.

--we were *wrong.*

AGH! YOU BLOODY--

What is that, Commander Trabin?

Arm yourself, Vonos.

When Trabin was but a boy, the sibyl who performed his Verus gave him the moniker ***First Blood.***

As a young soldier, he earned his name time and time again.

AAARRRGHHH!

HALT!

Always at the front line with his men. Always first in battle.

SHUNK

The name followed him through the years. Proudly spoken by those who served under him.

HRFF!

Do you yield?

But he always knew--

--he had always known-- what it meant.

SHUNK

First blood.

Never.

noooo!

The beginning of the war.

The beginning of the end.

No! No, no, no! Trabin...

Look at me.

Good boy. Now aim your crossbow at your head. And--

--pull the trigger.

Dust! What's wrong? Dust!

Saturnyne... she...she took something.

She took a piece of me.

The Fate of Vanaheim

Annotated by Frider Frostborn,
Current head Librarian at the Library of Prophecy.

In the fourth age of Vanaheim, behold the coming storm,
A battle fierce and deadly, where destinies will transform.

Between the light's pure radiance and shadows that encroach,
Four strangers shall arise, destiny they'll approach.

Fire, Sand, Fear and Bone. This confirms previous prophecies. Suggests some magical powers.

One of Fire, fierce and bold, a burning heart untamed,
Guiding flames of passion, in their name, a love reclaimed.

One of Sand, grounded deep, wisdom in their core,
Through the shifting sands of fate, they'll fight and they'll explore.

One of Fear, with courage clear, shall face the darkest night,
Conquering dread with valor, as stars embrace their light. Poetic drivel.

One of Bone, with ancient grace, shall bridge the realms of old,
In bones and spirits' whispers, fury shall unfold.

The suggestion is, once again, that the hidden power is a person.

But lo, a fifth stranger, in shadows yet unknown,
Their power hidden, to everyone but the throne.

References to the Witch.

From the great unknown, an endless army is unchained,
They march to rend the realm, for those who wish to reign.

Born of shadows deep, they emerge from the abyss,
Infinite in number, this threat we can't dismiss.

To drain the realm of life, to seize its very core,
In their relentless march, dark days we can't ignore.

Will the person, the fifth stranger, make a choice?

Beneath the depths of mind, a choice concealed from view,
Shall shape the realm's destiny, the old and new to construe.

In the balance of this choice, the world shall be remade,
What lies beyond, we cannot know, the future hides in shade.

House of Mult.

The Vanir mourn their leader.

Soldiers' grief surrounds them.

It is quiet and hard.

Magik is gone. Mary is drinking. Dani is screaming at the gods and you're *praying* to yours.

We're not doing great, are we?

With hardship comes ease, Sarah.

I am grateful we are here. I am grateful we are together.

Tears suffocated by the weight of war.

The forest seems to grieve with them.

Sif...

Sif?!

Is there something keeping your eyes from us?

Dani's voice pierces through the silence of the trees.

Or are you *watching?*

Are you watching us die?

Loud enough to reach the gods.

This is not a war. It is *extermination.*

It is the death of a branch of your precious World Tree, and you do *nothing?*

Is this suffering beneath the attention of Asgard?

But if they can hear her--

--they do not answer.

In this pivotal hour, I have entrusted the role of second in command to Captain Vonos. A sense of peace envelops me, a conviction that this choice is the correct one. I have told him all he needs to know. The rest I take to my grave. Preparations for the impending war proceed apace with one glaring exception: the scarcity of rations.

Not since the great flood of the second age have Vanaheim's fertile fields yielded so meagerly. The harvest withers beneath the soil. The once-rich earth has grown desolate, as if plagued by some malignant illness. Autumn is already here. We march under trees of yellows and reds. It would be beautiful if it were not so wrong. The roots rot.

The ground is barren. I bear the weight of 200,000 souls under my command, yet I cannot feed them. The battle looms on the horizon, and I stand already disadvantaged. We cannot use our sorcerers. We cannot trust the soil. It feels like war has already begun.

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Commander Trabin of the House of Mult,
Vanaheim

Got you, little squall.

@$%# your fate, you old crank.

According to the prophecy, the battle is about to begin.

But that will not happen. The mutants are running scared. Our defenses are holding. Our allies are ready.

Even if the Vanir attack us, it will not be as prophesied.

It will not be the grand war... Army vs. army on a field of battle.

They will exhaust their forces on the citadel's walls like the ocean smashing into cliffs.

The battle is about to begin. It will be the grand war.

You will see.

You are infuriating for a dead woman, you know?

There are worse things to be.

My queen.

We need to make a choice... redirect our power reserves to bring over the army or force Curse to act.

Perhaps. Where is Curse?

I want her...

...close.

Emberstone Citadel, main entrance.
At the same time.

The citadel is teeming with life.

In between the recruits for Saturnyne's army--

--and prisoners for her dungeon--

--no one pays ***Magik*** any mind.

Much as I enjoy the occasional bloodbath--

--it does come with a lot of cleanups.

So I repeat--

--do not enter through the gates ***armed!***

It will detect weapons, spells, wands, enchantments and magical artifacts.

If you're in doubt about possessing any of these items, please contact one of the guards.

WANTED

I heard that one breathes fire.

HMPH--

Only when she's angry.

You are welcome to seek shelter in the citadel, provided you're ready to swear your allegiance to our queen.

I repeat.

Do not... *DO NOT* enter the gate if you carry a wea--

AARARGHHH!

The amulet... it was my mother's--

AAAH!

Why do I bother?

GUARDS!

Nooo! I didn't know! I didn't--

Magik cannot be sure her powers are undetectable as well as inaccessible.

Keep moving!

But she has come too far to stop now.

Part of her wants the gate to see something in her.

Tease out her old self since she seems unable to do so on her own.

But it finds nothing.

Recruit or vendor?

The screams of torture blend with the sound of something else.

RECRUIT OR VENDOR?

Me? Ehh...

Recruit.

Oh, for--! She's back at it. SHIELD YOUR HEADS!

Somewhere above them--

--there is laughter.

Damned clay pigeons! How are we supposed to work like this?

If I ever get my hands on that little--

Curse?

Magik follows the sound of joy--

PULL!

--and mischief.

Curse?

Very good, Lady Curse!

Curse! Oh, thank the gods...

Magik?!

What are *you* doing here?

I came for you, of course.

Oh? Took you long enough.

Magik faces her greatest challenge yet--

--talking sense to a teenager.

You left me!

We looked for you every day.

We looked *everywhere.*

I've been right here all along!

The White Witch...she's been keeping us out. The entire realm is cut off from the rest of the universe.

We've been trying to get to you...but I'm without my mutant powers, and--

--and I think she's robbing Vanaheim of *mystical* powers too. I can't use my magic.

You have to believe me.

She's been keeping us from you.

Then why are you here now?

I managed to sneak through the gate.

Curse...you must see that she's not a good person... They're torturing people as entertainment down there.

They're torturing *traitors.*

You can tell a lot about someone in how they treat their prisoners.

Cool. That's your opinion. Well, thanks for coming. See you around.

Please... come back with me. See the others. They're all waiting for you!

I have been young and alone.

I know how easy it can be to cling to whatever kindness you happen to find.

But know that whatever you've done or whatever you do, you can always come home to us.

We're your family. You can come home anytime you want. Always.

Whatever. I'm late for dinner.

There you are, Curse. I have been looking all over for you.

Who's your special friend, my dear?

We're not *friends.*

And she's not special. She doesn't even have her stupid powers anymore.

Oh hell... *Saturnyne!*

Magik.

AAGHHH!

I did not know you were here. My little birds told me about the others weeks ago... *the four.*

But not you. I wish I had known.

There is some triumph in it, having you here...

...powerless.

Agrh...what... what are you doing here?

I am creating something new. A new realm. A new home. A new...center of operations.

Is it not a lovely place for it?

You're draining the realm of power. You're draining it of its very nature!

How long do you think Vanaheim will survive? How long before the woods and the winds change?

Sacrifices must be made, Magik.

But do not worry yourself about it. You will not be here for it.

Tell me...

...how is it...being *ordinary?*

Saturnyne would never admit it, but Magik has a point.

AAAAAEEEE!

Never mind. It hardly matters.

The only way to save Vanaheim from destruction is to unlock the power source lurking deep below them.

And for that she needs Curse.

Is she right?

Have you been keeping them from me?!

Mmm...

Do you believe *her* over me?

Are they here?! Were they looking for me all this time?

Last I checked, they were looking for ways to get back to Midgard, not looking for *you*.

Don't lie to me!

I'm not, sweetheart! And don't raise your voice at me.

You are! You said they weren't looking for me! What else are you lying about?

What is this, Curse? I took you in, remember? When nobody else wanted you.

Are you keeping Vanaheim from the rest of the worlds? Are we trapped here? Is this your doing? Are they really traitors? The prisoners?

So many questions. I think what you need is a nap and a meal, my dear.

No!

No more lies...

Show the world who you are.

On Curse's words--

--shields *fall.*

Charms *fall.*

Lies and disguises crumble--

What... what did you do?

--until there is nothing left but *truth.*

Moments before.

As she falls to her death, Magik tries to remember a moment in time.

A memory she has worked hard to forget.

"My little snowflake.

"There are so many kinds of powers.

"Yet you reach for the obvious."

You reach for the magic in the wind and earth--

--you try to summon chaos--

I...I CAN'T DO IT, BELASCO! IT... BURNS!

Well, yes... but it is the only way.

There is magic in despair.

There is magic in words that hurt more than blades.

In the echoes of screams of pain--

--in fallen tears--

--in cold sweat--

--there is power in the misery of the world.

Use it.

(She remembers.)

To be concluded!

KRAKOA is for all MUTANTS

[fall__of]
[_____X]

FOLLOW THE FALL:

ALPHA FLIGHT #3

DARK X-MEN #3

JEAN GREY #3

MS. MARVEL: THE NEW MUTANT #3

REALM OF X #3

X-MEN #28

X-MEN RED #17

UNCANNY SPIDER-MAN #3

X-FORCE #46

ASTONISHING ICEMAN #4

CHILDREN OF THE VAULT #4

DARK X-MEN #4

JEAN GREY #4

[realm__03]
[of_x___03]

KAMIC RIDER

MARIKA